

8b

NB

163

.V6

R6

1912

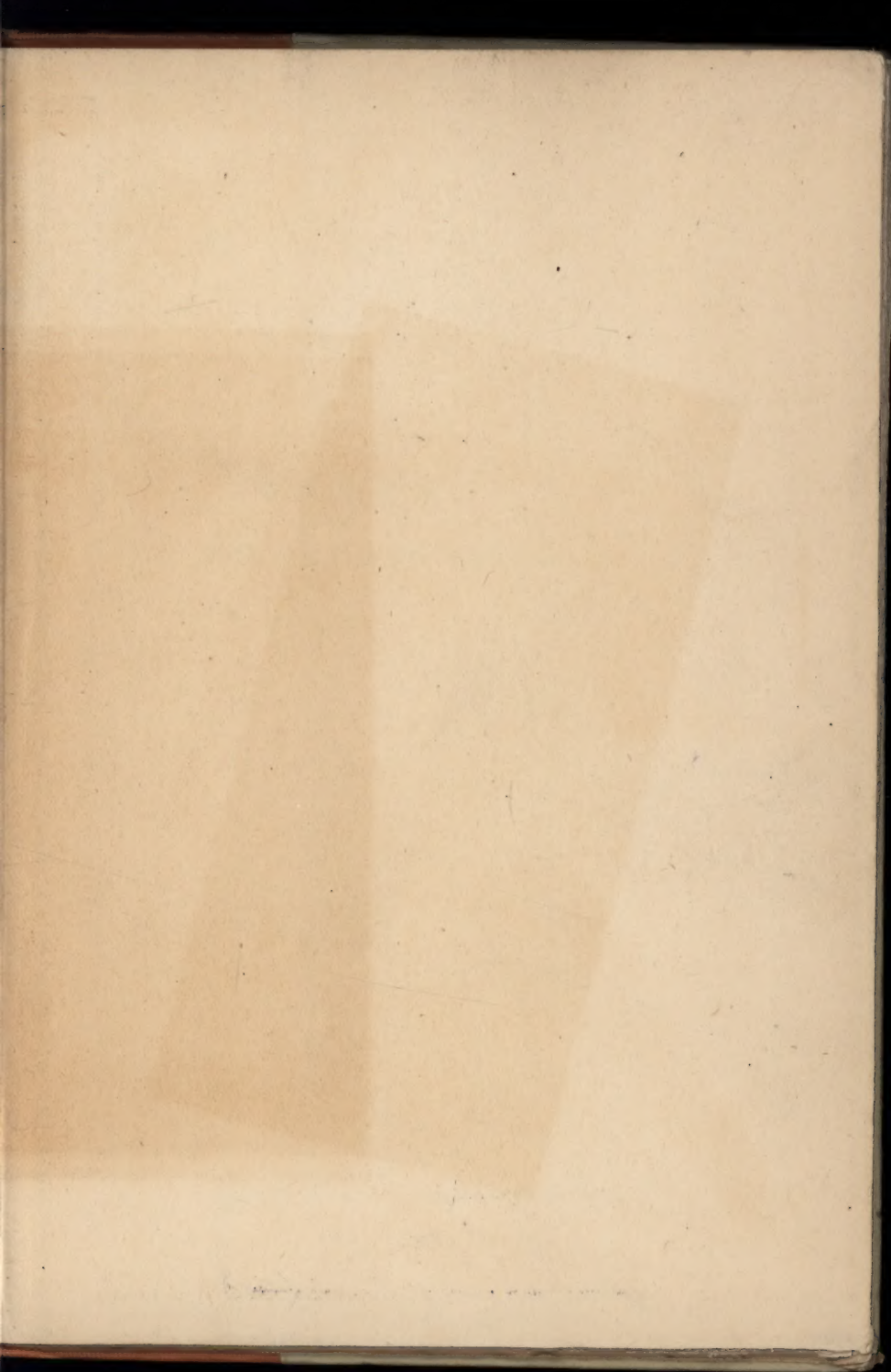
VENUS

AUGUSTE

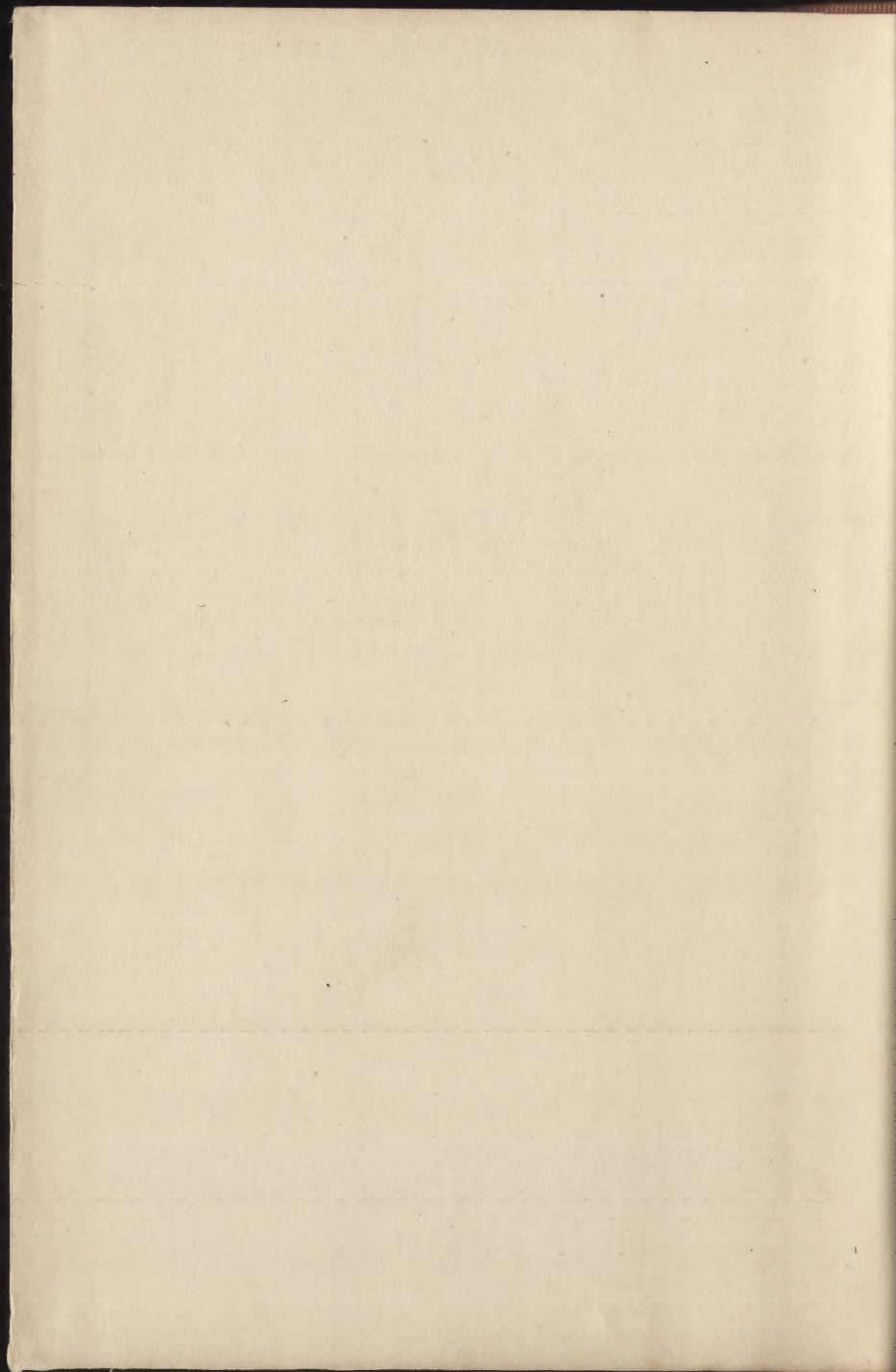
RODIN



*Ulrich Middeldorf*

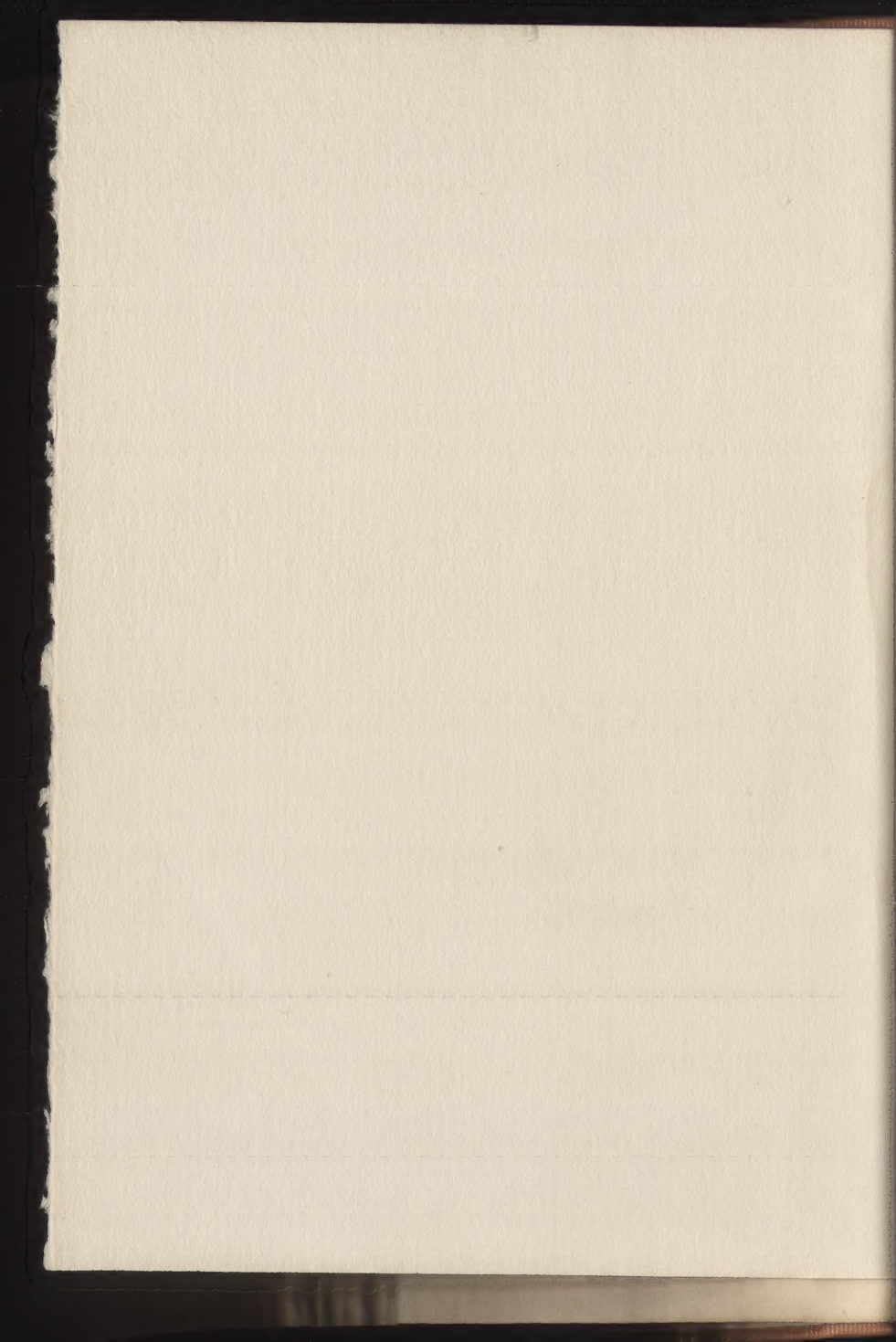






V E N U S

TO THE VENUS OF MELOS



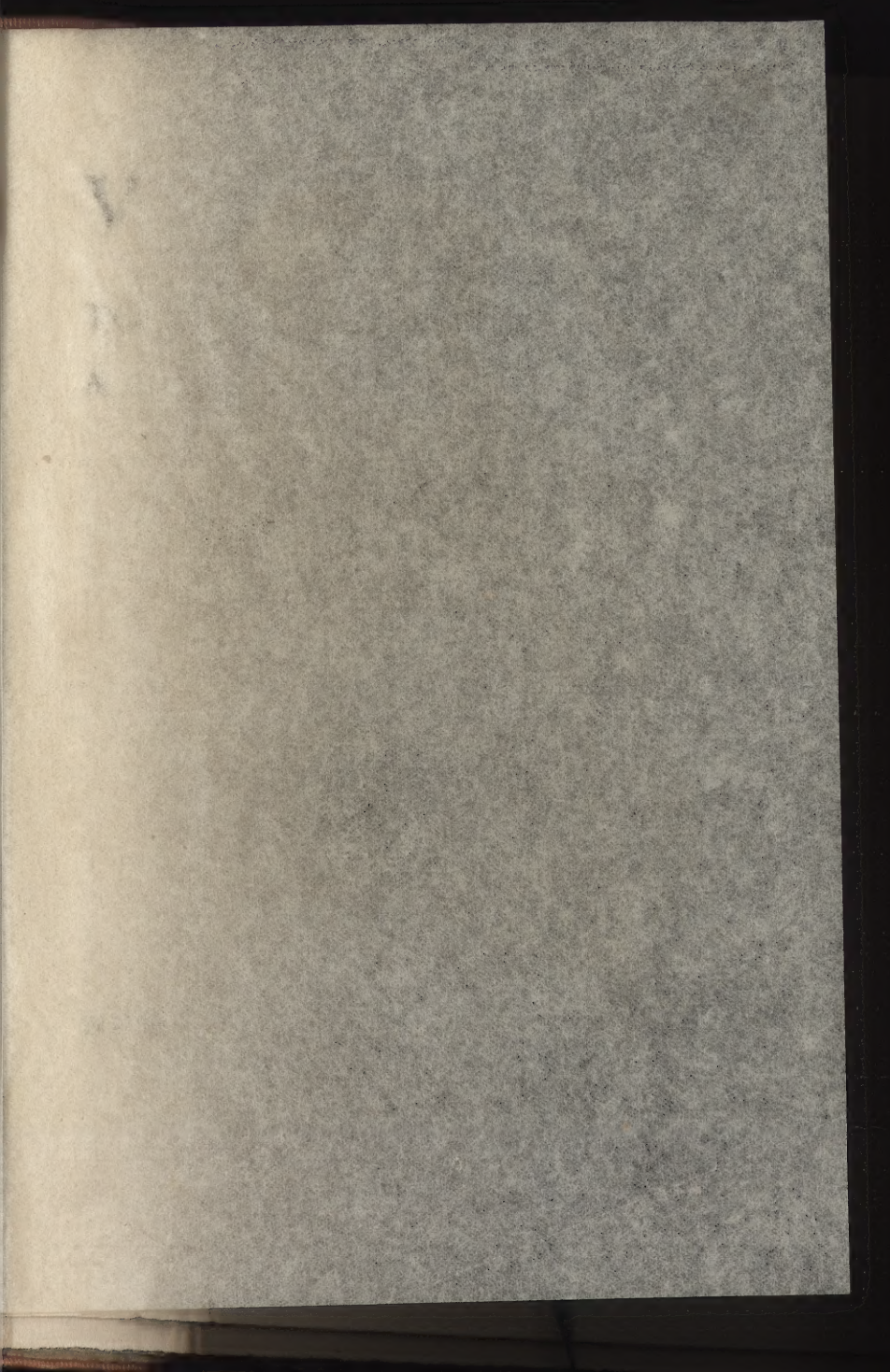






DRAWN BY GERTRUDE HUEDSCH









# V E N U S

TO THE VENUS OF MELOS

A U G U S T E   R O D I N

AUTHORIZED TRANSLATION  
FROM THE FRENCH BY  
DOROTHY DUDLEY



NEW YORK: B. W. HUEBSCH

1912



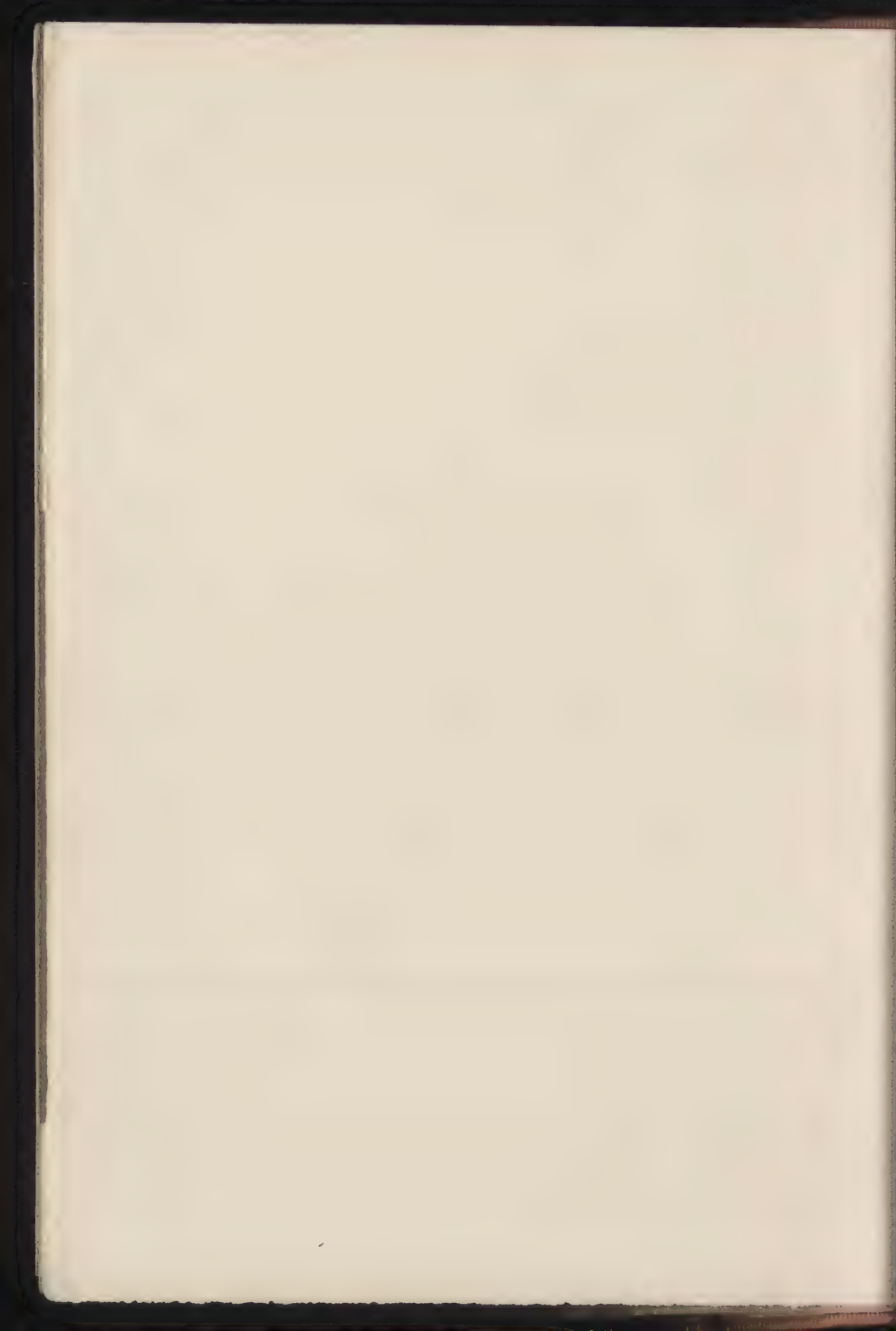
**COPYRIGHT, 1912,**  
**By B. W. HUEBSCH**

**PRINTED IN U.S.A.**

THE CITY CENTER  
LIBRARY

V E N U S

TO THE VENUS OF MELOS







MODELLED by the sea,  
which is the reservoir  
of all the forces, you  
enchant us and you  
sway us by that grace  
and by that calm which strength alone  
possesses, and you bestow on us your  
serenity. It prevails like the charm  
of melodies powerful and deep.

What triumphant amplitude! What  
vigorous shadows!

From the boundaries of the two  
worlds throngs come to contemplate  
you, venerated marble; and the twi-  
light deepens in the room that you  
may be more clearly seen, shining

alone, while the silent hours pass, heavy with admiration.

Still you hear our clamours, immortal Venus! Having loved your contemporaries, you belong to us, now, to all of us, to the universe. The twenty-five centuries of your life seem only to have consecrated your invincible youth. And the generations, those waves of the ocean of the ages, to you, victorious over time, come and come again, attracted and recalled irresistibly. Admiration is not spent as a marble wears away.

To the poets, to the seekers, to the quiet artists, in the heart of the city's tumult, you give long moments of refuge. Mutilated, you remain entire to their eyes. If the ravages of

time have been permitted, it is only that a trace may continue of their profane effort and of their impotence.

You are not a vain and sterile statue, the image of some unreal goddess of the Empyrean. Ready for action, you breathe, you are a woman: and that is your glory. You are goddess only in name; the mythological nectar does not run in your veins. What is divine in you is the infinite love of your sculptor for nature. More ardent and above all more patient than other men, he was able to lift a corner of the veil too heavy for their idle hands.

And you are not, moreover, a mosaic of admirable shapes. There are no admirable shapes, but the shapes



that agree, those that summon and presuppose one another according to the irrefutable logic of harmonious necessity, those that borrow life from one another. Yours gather in an indivisible whole, and it is the calm torrent of life that passes over you, that torrent whence you have sprung, naked and one.

Collected beauties could never have attained this unity. One detail that harmonized not with all the others, the least variance between the profiles, and the work of art would be destroyed, a useless thing, a senseless construction, renounced by the light, and doomed to all the poverties, to all the discords. This would be fatally the lot of even a clever assem-

blage, of even perfect pieces, chosen from different marbles.

But you, you live, you think, and your thoughts are those of a woman, and not of I know not what superior being, foreign, imaginary, artificial. You are made only of truth; and it is of truth alone that your omnipotence is born. There is nothing strong, there is nothing beautiful outside of the truth.

Your truth is within reach of everyone: it is woman, whom each one thinks he knows, the intimate companion of men; yet nobody has seen her, the wise not more than the simple. And the trees, who looks at them? The light has no spectators.

Nevertheless, except through con-

fining oneself to the observation of reality, constant, scrupulous, and ever more profound, no one can accomplish anything. There are people who say to you, "The Ideal." If this word is not void of meaning, it signifies only a stupidity. The Ideal! The Fantasy! But the realities of nature surpass our most ambitious fancies. Our thought is but an imperceptible point in nature. The part does not embrace, does not dominate the whole.

Man is incapable of creating, of inventing. He can only approach nature, submissively, lovingly. For the rest, she will not disappear from his sight; he has but to look, she will let him see what by force of patience

he has arrived at understanding—that only. And yet the part is beautiful! He is an equal of Prometheus, he, who has known how to ravish from nature the life we adore in the Venus of Melos.

Nothing will take the place of persevering study. To it alone the secret of life delivers itself. Give your life patiently, passionately to understanding life. What profit, if you come indeed to understand! You will be in the circle of joy forever.

To understand, to see—truly to see! Would one recoil before the necessary effort, before the indispensable apprenticeship, however long and laborious, if he foresaw the happiness of understanding?



To understand! It is — not to die!

For me the antique masterpieces are mingled in my memory with all the pleasures of my youth; or rather the Antique is my youth itself that rises again to my heart and hides from me my age. In the Louvre, of old, like saints to a monk in his cloister, the Olympian gods said to me all that a young man might usefully hear; later they protected and inspired me; after an absence of twenty years, I found them again with an indescribable joy, and I understood them. These divine fragments, these marbles, older than two thousand years, speak to me louder, move me more than human beings.

In its turn may the new century meditate upon these marvels, and may it try to ascend to them through intelligence and love. It will owe to them its highest joys. Man may be the forger of his happiness.

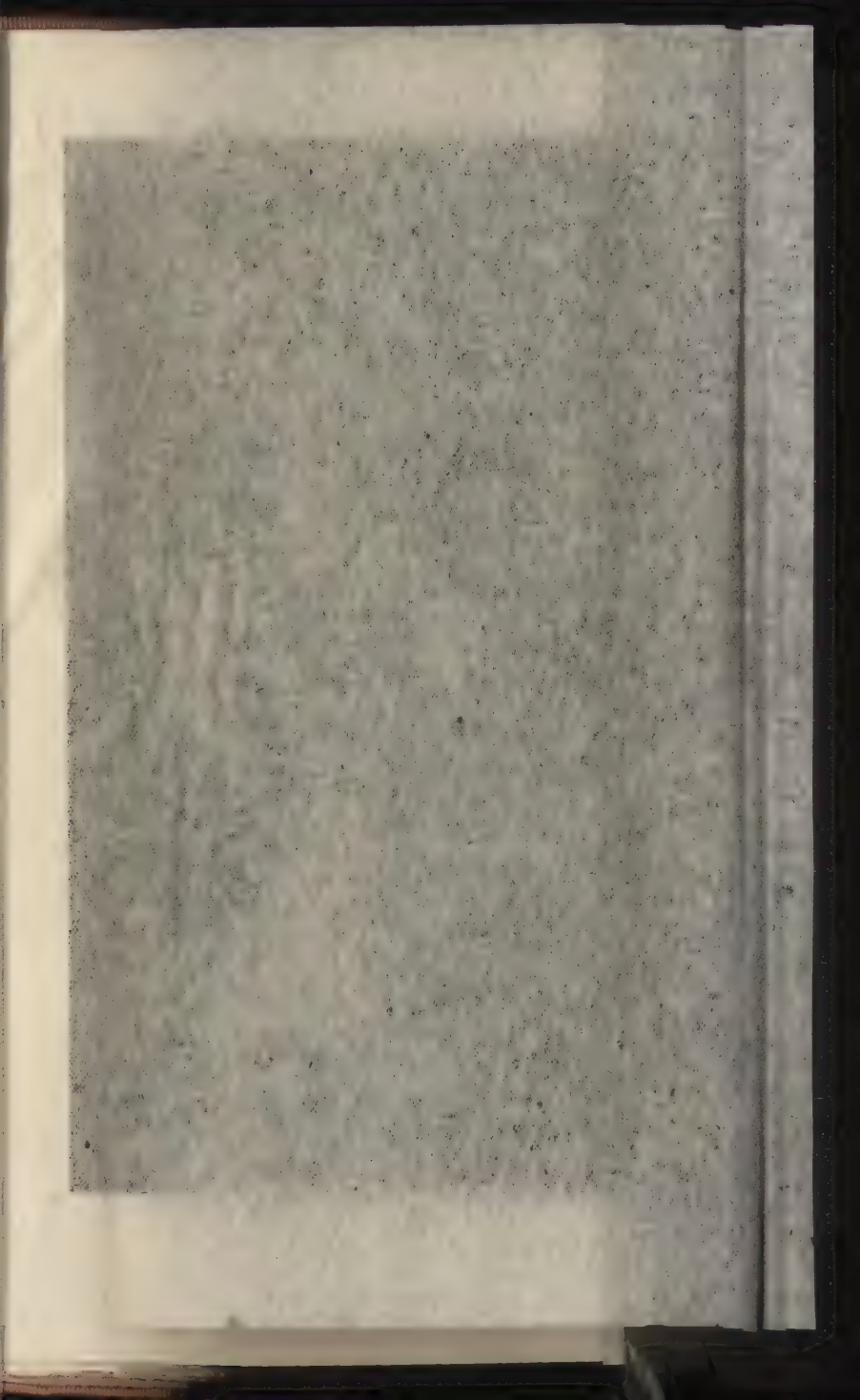
The Antique and Nature are bound by the same mystery. The Antique—it is the human workman arrived at a supreme degree of mastery. But nature is above him. The mystery of Nature is even more insoluble than that of genius. The glory of the Antique is in having understood Nature.

O, Venus of Melos, the prodigious sculptor that fashioned you knew how to make the thrill of that generous nature flow in you, the thrill

of life itself—O, Venus, arch of the triumph of life, bridge of truth, circle of grace!

What splendour in your beautiful torso seated firmly on your solid legs, and in those half tones that sleep upon your breasts, upon your splendid belly, large like the sea! It is the rhythmic beauty of the sea without end. . . . You are in truth the mother of gods and of men.

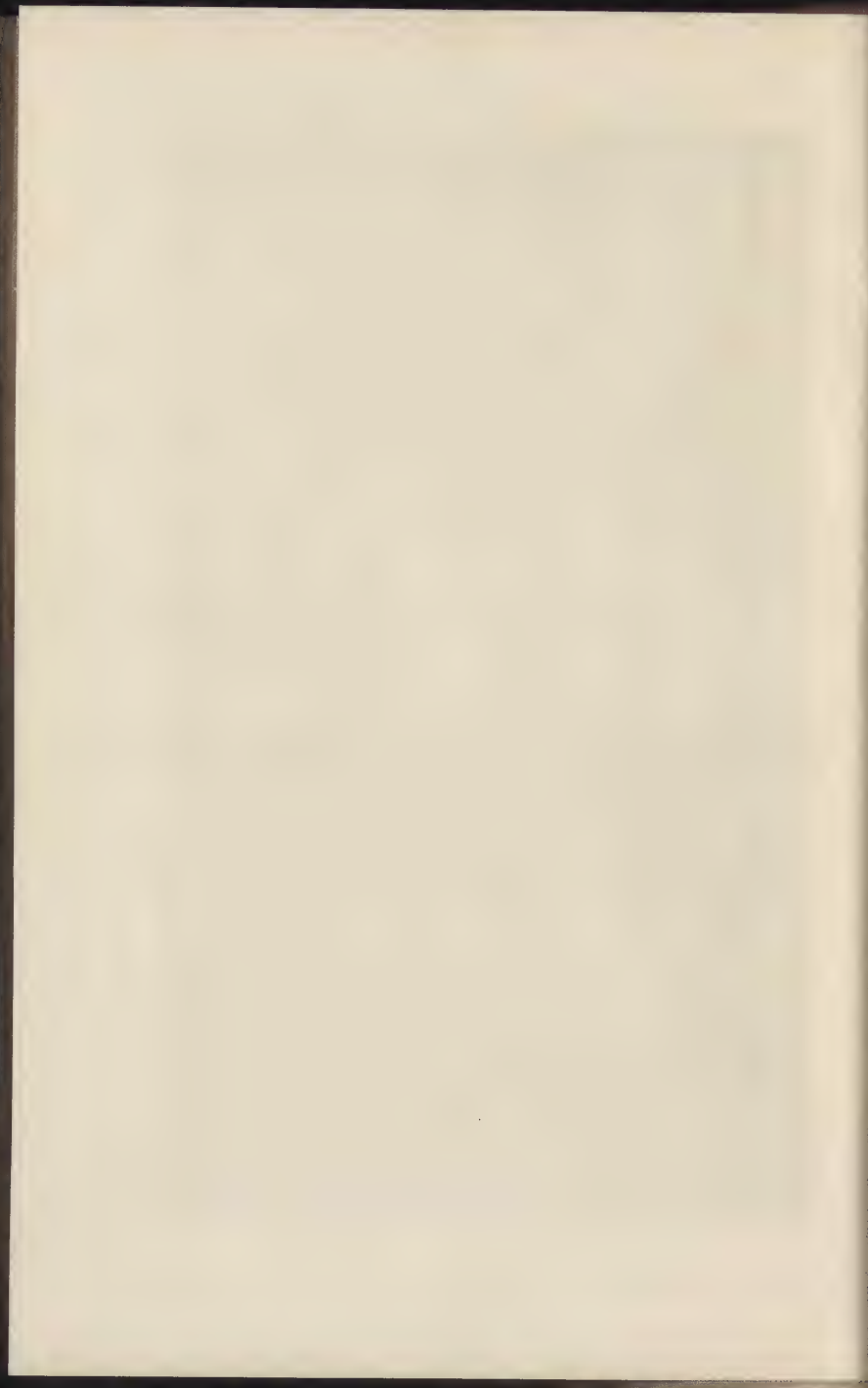
The generative profile of that torso helps us to understand, reveals to us the proportions of the world. And the miracle is in this, that the assembled profiles, in the sense of depth, of length, and of width, express, by an incomprehensible magic, the human soul and its passions, and the











character that shapes the heart of beings.

The ancients have obtained by a minimum of gesture, by their modelling, both the individual character and the grace borrowed from grandeur that relates the human form to the forms of the universal life. The modelling of the human being has with them all the beauty of the curved lines of flowers. And the profiles are secure, ample like those of great mountains; it is architecture. Above all they are simple; they are calm like the serpents of Apollo.

Perhaps it is the terms of anatomy that have had the deplorable effect of imposing on the mind the prejudice toward the division of the shapes



of the body. The great geometric and magnetic line of life hence remains as if broken in the regard of the passer-by. This theoretical analysis has altered among the uninitiated the sense of the truth.

The work of art protests against this false and factitious idea of division. Those concordant shapes that pass one into the other as undulate the knots of the reptile, and that suddenly penetrate, they are the body in its magnificent unity.

Left to themselves the ignorant see only the apparent details of things; the source of expression, the synthesis alone eloquent, escapes them. It is lamentable that anatomic description gives in some measure support to the

plastic ignorance of the multitude, in calling attention, through its terms, to the different parts of which the architecture of the body is composed. Those pedantic words, biceps, triceps, brachial or crural, and so many others, those current words, arms, legs, plastically have no significance. In the synthesis of the work of art, the arms, the legs, count only when they meet in accordance with the planes that associate them in a same effect, and it is thus in nature, who cares not for our analytical descriptions. The great artists proceed as nature composes and not as anatomy decrees. They never sculpture any muscle, any nerve, any bone for itself; it is the whole at which they aim,

and which they express; it is by large planes that their work vibrates in the light or enters into the shadow.

THUS from the point whence I am looking at the Venus of Melos, all of the three-quarter profile is streaming with light, while the opposite side bathes in the shadow. Toward the base of this profile one just distinguishes half-tones. Higher up, farther away, the head rises and reigns, modelled by light and shade, while the reposeing lines, the sloping lines of the back play together their slow melodies. What condescendence the long gentle lines of that back express, and the flight of the loins into the half-tone! Sublime pride of mar-



ble! Tranquil life of the soul of the body! Nature is an uninterrupted harmony.

Consider the Venus from any profile you choose. That we were just admiring is of a beauty that invokes, that imposes the idea of the eternal. But change your position; here is another profile: it is equally marked with the seal of the imperishable. All of them incite admiration and tenderness. They are happy, at ease in the calm air.

That face has the variety and the liberty of a flower, and the artist, leaning attentively over it, rises as one vowed to religion: he has heard Venus speak.

I will walk round her. . . . Here

is another profile that shows me the face. There is shadow in that mouth; a moment ago there was none; to drawing is added modelling, and the lines that hesitated have become decided. The edge of the lips is slightly rimmed, the edge of the nostrils also; these are the signs of youth. The mouth has in it the drawing of the school, but it is on the plane of a master. The error would be to seek the measurement of the lips. It is all in the plane of the head, of the cheek. That cheek, which appears to me lost in profile, that cheek is all of sculpture, as one virtue is every virtue.—O mouth so simple, so natural, so generous! It holds thousands of kisses! Impossible to escape

its charm. Even the most ignorant visitor is touched by it. How clearly one sees that the woman has posed for the divinity!

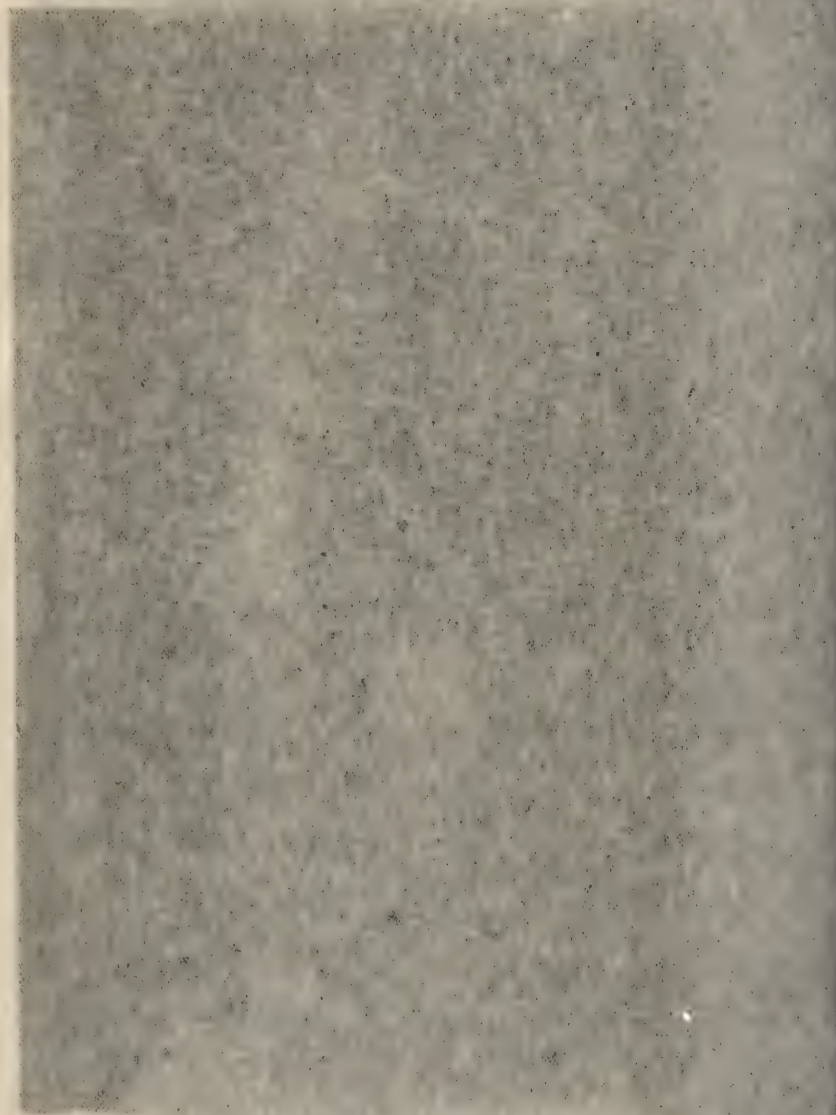
The soul of shapes breathes in the profound life of this thrilling body. I see her magnificent armature of bones as I see her thoughts—all her grace hidden and present, how powerfully organized! In this form sweet as honey, where the eye surprises neither blacks nor violent lights, but where life flows without jerks or starts, clear as live water, one feels keenly the resistance of a resolute and powerful frame! Supported by these bases that will not weaken, sure of their solidity, the flesh bounds with joy as if it would escape the re-

doubled shadows deepening under the breasts, that they may rise from the torso, whence glowing light would seem to emanate.

And the high adorable face gives to every one gracious welcome of life.

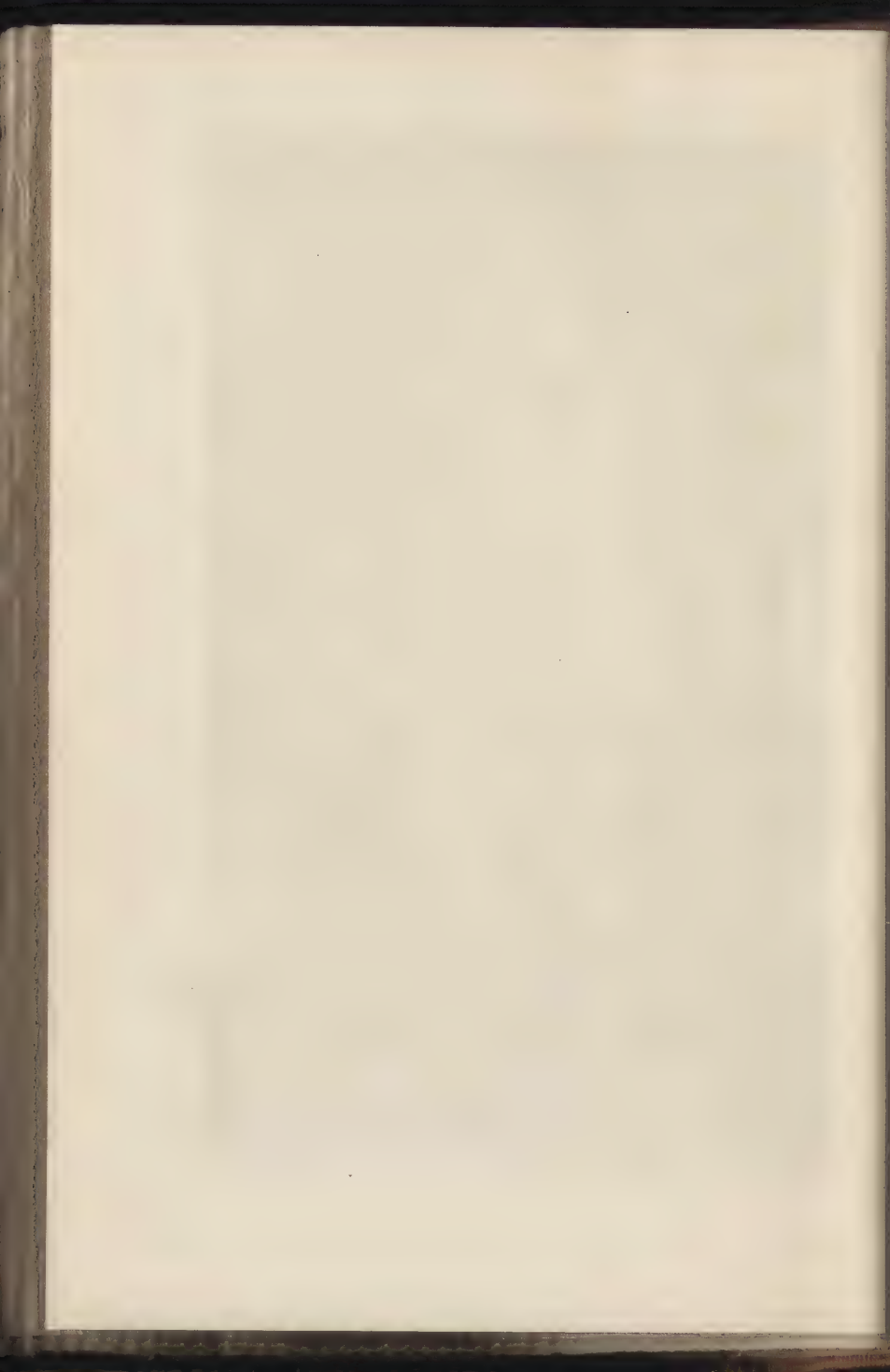
The shadows, the divine play of shadows on antique marbles! One might say that shadows love masterpieces. They hang upon them, they make for them adornment. I find only among the Gothics and with Rembrandt such orchestras of shadows. They surround beauty with mystery; they pour peace over us, and allow us to hear without trouble that eloquence of the flesh that ripens and amplifies the spirit. That elo-













quence darts on us the truth, diffuse as light. It is the radiancy of gladness. What secret emotion invades me before the meditated grace of this design! Ineffable passages of light into shadow! inexpressible splendours of half tones! Nests of love! What marvels that have not yet a name in this sacred body! Venus Genetrix! Venus Victorum! O, total glory of grace and of genius!

Admiration overtakes me like sleep.

THE Venus of Melos is reflected by all the others: in them is accentuated one or another of her infinite beauties.

In this one, free of all draperies, the modelling of the shadows makes

the flesh breathe even more voluptuously; that thigh, column of life, is literally quivering.

In this other, the light and shade of the belly and of the legs produce a kind of fluctuation where passes all of love; all its intoxication and then its appeasement. The upper part of the body inclines in a gesture of reverence; movement how gracious! where the Gothic and the Renaissance find their symbol.

And again this one, what instinct bends it into an arc of grace! A single curve made of all those, of the shoulders, of the legs, of the thighs, designs the kneeling Venus.

I possess a little masterpiece, which

long baffled all the habits of my eyes and of my mind, all my understanding. I have vowed to it deep gratitude, for it has made me think a great deal.

This figure belongs to the epoch of the Venus of Melos. It gives me the same sensation of modelling, powerful and abundant; it has the same ease in the grandeur of its forms, although they are materially of reduced proportions. What calm intoxication it breathes and inspires, or, rather, what luxury of pleasure!

The beautiful shadows that caress it have all the same direction, turn all in the same sense. With what science, with what wisdom they cause the breasts to jut, and then, slum-

bering on the wide belly, vigorously model the thighs!

One of the arms at the side is drawn back and drowned in delicate light and shade. The gesture of the other arm holds the draperies over the thighs to gather below the belly fervent shadow.

Shadow, desired by the artist, makes for all this figure a first tunic, veiling certain shapes and discovering others of them. Looking closely, one sees that all these varied tones are underscored by a single dark line, the line of strength.

It is the principle of beautiful sculpture as of beautiful architecture. The expression of life, in order to keep the infinite suppleness of real-



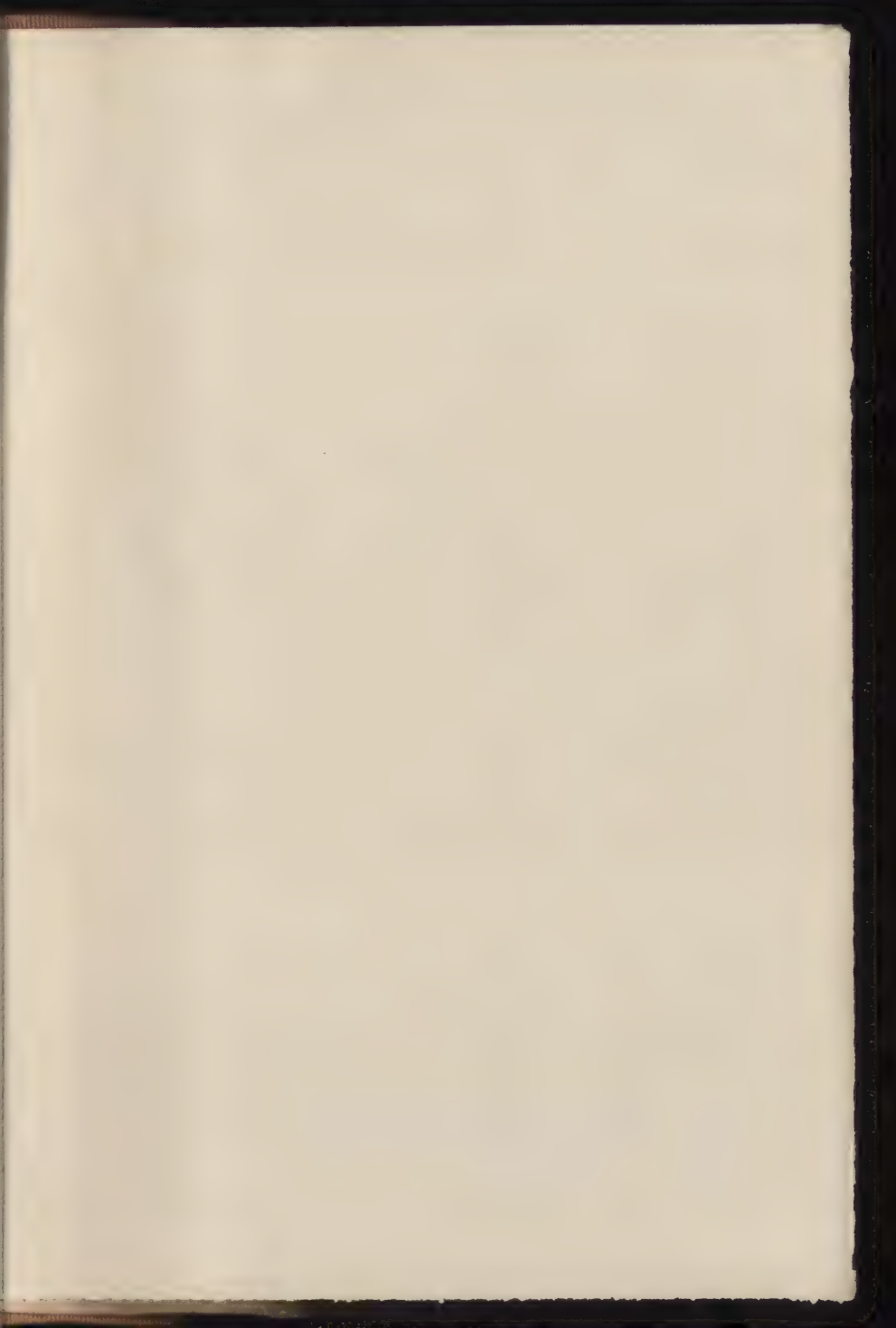
ity, must never be stopped or fixed. The dark element, essential to the effect, must then be carefully contrived.

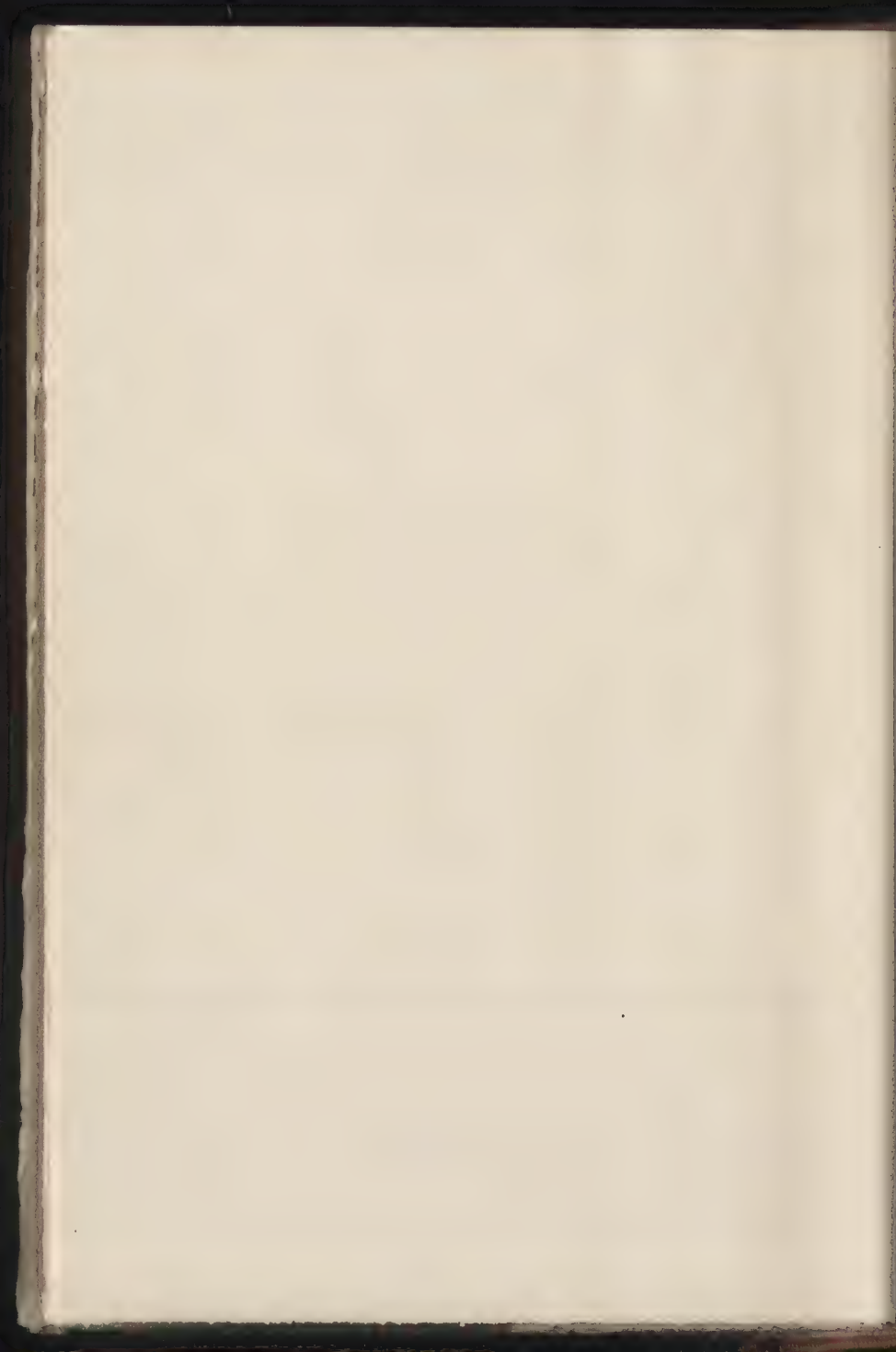
One observes that the antique masterpieces have all been treated in this way. That is why they produce the impression of sweet measure and of durability.

Badly proportioned the results are truly blasphemies against nature. They no longer have eloquence, and breed only harshness and meagreness. From a distance, moreover, measure yields the most powerful results. The Venus of Melos in particular owes to this moderation her power of effect. There is nothing abrupt. Approaching her step by

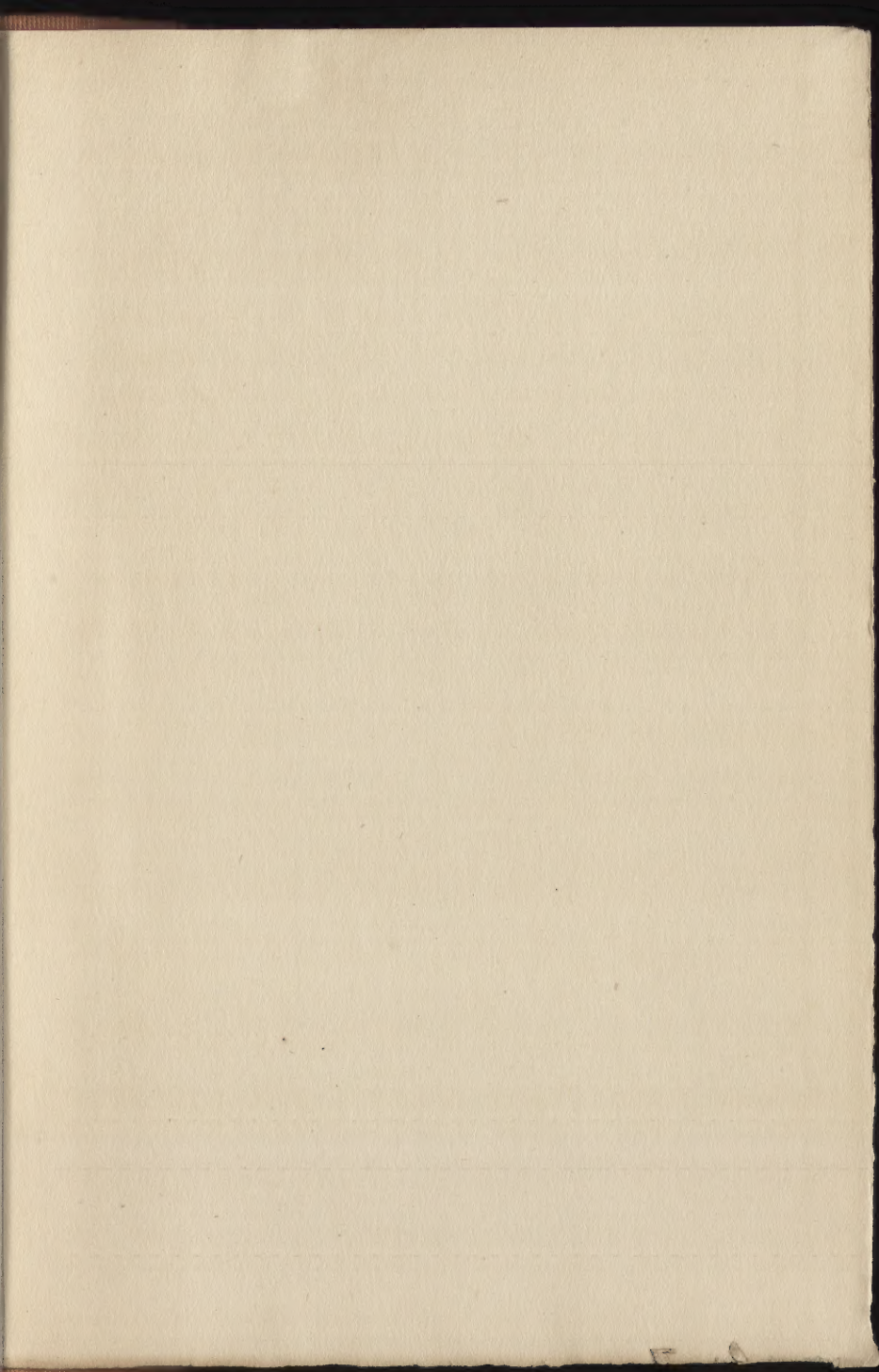
step, one imagines that she has been gradually modelled by the continuous effort of the sea.

Is this not what the Ancients wished to say in affirming that Aphrodite was born of the womb of the waters?









The Venus of the Lascaux {B. Grunni} from Spec Phil V-  
Restoration of the Venus of Milas " " " " "  
by Carl Van Duzen -

Radin is certainly the greatest of living  
sculptors a worthy successor to Rodin  
and Barye (314) & greatest in the long line -

His "Almanac" the daughter of "Seamus",  
a young angel's figure with a broken wing  
and face crushed against the hard grain of  
of part (319) the essential character of the  
Greek type of beauty is that the shoulders are  
practically as broad as the hips (322)

Imagery Radin

"The perfect that art has not  
yet. It has the greatest; everything that  
makes for happiness is of the highest  
usefulness. But it must not be forgotten  
the artists are the only madmen who take  
joy in an aim and find delight in la-  
bor (p 223) "

14 cent Harris Contemporary P

Radw. C. L. Hays

Critic Dec-02

Interpretation Monthly

Heavenly Parnassus New England May  
St. Gaudens P. S. Sep-07

The Criticism - Scrap Book

C. L. Hays

GETTY CENTER LIBRARY



3 3125 00100 4379



